

*The Remembrance of our Creator in the Days
of our Youth opened and enforced*

IN A
S E R M O N
O N T H E

D E A T H

O F

MR. THOMAS WILTON,

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE AUGUST 5, 1776,

IN THE THIRTY-FIRST YEAR OF HIS AGE.

By THOMAS GIBBONS, D.D.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

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By ABRAHAM BOOTH.

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W. Thurgrove



TO MY DEAR AND HONOURED FRIENDS,
THE PARENTS,
BRETHREN, AND SISTERS,
OF THE
DECEASED,
THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE,

PREACHED AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR DESIRE,

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THEIR MOST AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

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ECCLESIASTES XII. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

The former Part of the Verse :

Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth.

THESE words are a passage out of that book on sacred record styled *Ecclesiastes*, or the *Preacher*. There is no doubt but it is the compofure of *Solomon*, as the introduction, chap. i. ver. 1. acquaints us. At what particular period of time it was drawn up we are not informed, but it is not improbable that it was written by him towards the conclusion of his days, as it evidently contains his reflections upon the vanity of human life after a large experience of it, and as it seems to be in itself a legacy of paternal instruction and counsel to our world, when his days on earth should be numbered and finished. *Solomon* was a wise man, a man of surpassing wisdom, and his day opened like a morning

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without

without cloud, but it was followed with a dark eclipse, that greatly dishonoured his God, and grievously distressed himself. Consider we then this book as composed by him after his recovery from his sin and shame, and when, like a fine setting sun, whose noon has been dismally darkened, he broke out, and shone in his unclouded brightness, and left our world in a kind of redoubled vigour and glory. But whenever the *Ecclesiastes* was indited, this we are sure of that it contains most sage and excellent remarks and directions, and among the rest that of our text is none of the least valuable, and important; *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*

These words may be considered in connection with the preceding verses of the former chapter. In the ninth verse of that chapter, the preacher, addressing himself to a young man, says, *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes;* that is, Solomon speaking in Irony, “lay the reins upon the neck of thy lusts, and go with an uncontrouled license into all the delights to which thy sensual appetites may incline thee;” *but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment;* “but alas! Young man, consider that, pleasant as this course, as these indulgences may seem, a judgment, an Audit-Day will come, and that there is not one hour of guilty gratification, nor one act of violation of the sacred boundaries which God has prescribed thee, but what will be called over, and must be accounted for at the divine tribunal.” *Therefore, ver. 10. remove sorrow from thine heart, and put away evil from thy flesh, for childhood and youth is vanity,* “Therefore hearken to the
I “precepts

" precepts of religion, and govern thyself by
 " them, as they are so conducive to thine own
 " enjoyment and happiness, for hereby thou wilt
 " prevent an insupportable weight of sorrow from
 " falling upon thine heart, and the arrows of the
 " keenest anguish from fastening upon thy body ;
 " for childhood and youth are vanity, their plea-
 " sures soon wither and die, their root goes up as
 " rottenness, and their blossom as the dust, and
 " therefore they are not worthy thy pursuit,
 " and will by no means recompense for the loss
 " of thy soul ; or, as Bishop *Patrick* expounds
 the place, " For if such care as this be not taken
 " to lay restraints upon him there is nothing
 " more senselessly foolish, rash, inconsistent, and
 " forward to ruin itself than man in his child-
 " ish youth, when he is in the dawning, as we call
 " it, of his days, and comes first acquainted with
 " the pleasures of the world." In this connexion
 how properly is it added, *Remember now thy Cre-
 ator*, or as more declarative of the connexion,
And remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth?

In treating on this passage I shall

I. Consider whom we are called to remember,
our Creator.

II. I shall open what may be intended by re-
membering our Creator.

III. I shall take notice of the season when we
are to remember our Creator ; *in the days of our
youth.*

IV. And lastly, I shall offer some arguments
why we should fall in with the exhortation of our
text, that of *remembering our Creator in the days
of our youth.*

I. I shall consider whom we are called to remember, *our Creator*. Remember thy *Creator*. God may be very properly viewed by us in his various attributes and relations. In his various attributes as the infinite, eternal, unchangeable *Jehovah*, almighty in power, unsearchable in his wisdom, perfect in his holiness, inviolable in his justice, unbounded in his goodness, and immutable in his truth. He may be considered also by us in his various relations, as our Maker, our Preserver, our Benefactor, our Sovereign, our Judge, and our End. Now the wise man, under the inspiration of his God, bids us remember *our Creator*. He, as it were singles out this relation of Deity for our particular regard, and would have us consider God not so much as having made all things, as having made ourselves. Know this assuredly, that the universe of Being, those things which we behold, and those things which we are certain actually exist, though we have never seen them, are all the work of God. He stretched out the heavens, he laid the foundations of the earth, he created the waters, and poured them out into the vast caverns, and channels prepared for them. He made all things whether above or below, whether material or spiritual beings; and the Archangel on his throne of glory, and the worm in its bed of dust, the stupendous globes of sun, moon, and stars, and the clods under our feet, are alike the products of his power; *of him, and through him, and to him are all things**. *Lift up your eyes, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their hosts by numbers; he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth*†. And presently after, *Hast thou not known?*

* Rom. xi. 36.

† Isa. xl. 26.

Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding *. But not only are we to consider that God made all things, but we are to bring home the truth to ourselves, and remember that he is *our* Creator.

After the Almighty and Allwise God had created the heavens, and the earth, and had furnished our world with its several inhabitants, he at last, as his greatest and noblest work, made man, and made him in his own image, after his own likeness †. He it was who formed these bodies. He made the head, the heart, and lungs, those seats of sensation and life. He moulded the eye, he fashioned the ear, he gave us our several senses, which are of so much importance, and the medium of so many of our pleasures in the present state. He built our frames, shaped, adjusted, and created these bones, and he covered them with skin and flesh. He created the branching nerves, he drew out the arteries and veins, and replenished them with their vital treasures; and there is not a single limb, nor the minutest part of these bodies, but what owes its existence to his power and wisdom. *For thou hast possessed, says the devout Psalmist, my reins. Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knows right well: my substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth: thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them* ‡. This body

* Isa. xl. 28. † Gen. i. 26. ‡ Psal. cxxxix. 13, 16.

is a monument of divine might and skill. It is a system of wonders: it is formed, may I so speak, with the curiosity of a God; and the deeper the researches that are made into its construction, its harmony, and its innumerable parts, the more shall we discover of the greatness of that God *who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working*, wise in heart, and mighty in strength†*. But remember, O man, thy Creator, not only as the Creator of thy body, but as the Creator of thy soul. Thou knowest, thou feelest there is *something* within thee that can think, and reason, and choose, and reject, can fear, and hope, and love, and rejoice, and mourn, and that is the mover of thy body, and has a command over it. This *something* called thy *soul* is the production of Deity, and because it is akin to him in spirituality of nature, in intelligence, in volition, in powers, it is spoken of as created *in the image of God‡*, nay it is called his offspring §, and he is said *to be its Father||*. That ray of reason, that freedom of action of which thou art possessed, that amazing capacity that can fly back to the ages, to the eternity past, travel through the generations yet to come, and launch into the unfathomable abyfs of future immortality, that can range through the breadth of the earth, dive into the depths of hell, and ascend up to the highest heavens; that capacity of knowing, fearing, glorifying, and enjoying God the fountain, the ocean of all excellency and happiness, that *unknown*, and yet *well-known* Being, thy self, thy soul, is the creation of God; a glimpse of his perfection has passed upon it. *He breathed into man, as well as formed his body of the dust of the ground, the breath of life, and man*

* Isa. xxviii. 29.

† Job ix. 4.

‡ Gen. i. 28.

§ Acts xvii. 28.

|| Heb. xii. 9.

became

became a living soul *. And, what may be constant matter of wonder to us, he has united these bodies and souls together, which constitute ourselves. The one is the curious casket, and the other the inestimable jewel; and the intellectual and animal natures are abridged, and concentrated in our mysterious persons. In these views God is our Creator; and as such we are called upon in our text to consider him.

But why not remember God in general? Or why not remember him as our Preserver, Benefactor, Lawgiver, Judge, and the like? I answer in this place we may be exhorted to remember God as *our Creator*, more particularly as,

(1.) We shall hence form the highest ideas of God. God is our Creator; the Creator of this body, this microcosm, this world of wonders. God is our Creator; the Creator of our souls. He ennobled us with understanding and reason above the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven: he invested us with his own image, he copied out his lineaments upon us, and made us in a sense partakers of a divine nature. He wonderfully connected these bodies and souls together, and established the union between what is in itself a clod of clay, and this thinking, spiritual, and immortal being, the soul. And is he indeed our Creator, and has he displayed such amazing power, and such consummate wisdom in our formation, then how great is that God who is our Maker? If there be something so wonderful in the effects, how much more wonderful is the Author of them? “ I see, should each one of
“ us say in devout meditation, the impressions of
“ Deity shining in the brightest and fullest characters upon me. I carry about with me

* Gen. ii. 7.

“ the wonders of a God. I cannot think, nor
 “ see, nor hear, nor speak, but I have the de-
 “ monstrations of the greatness of my Creator.
 “ I am in his temple wherever I am, nay, I myself
 “ am the temple of God, and therefore let me
 “ shew forth his praise.” Well then may we be
 called to remember our Creator, that we may
 thence be excited to entertain the highest ideas of
 God, that God who stretched forth the heavens,
 and laid the foundations of the earth, and per-
 haps as a much superior exertion of his power,
 and much nobler manifestation of his glory, *form-*
*ed the spirit of man within him**.

(2.) There may be great propriety in our being
 called upon to remember our Creator, as our
 sense and acknowledgment of him, as the Maker
 of all things, and as our Maker, is the very first
 and fundamental lesson of religion. Where does
 religion originate? Certainly in the acquaintance
 with God, not as our Preserver, not as our
 Benefactor, not as our Lawgiver, not as our
 Judge, but in the knowledge of him as the Cre-
 ator of all things, and our Creator. This truth
 being established, being confessed, we next pro-
 ceed to view him, to hold communion with him,
 as that God who upholds what he has made, as
 that God who shows his goodness to what he has
 made, as that God who lays claim to what he has
 made, and requires a tribute of praise to be paid
 him by the work of his own hands, and thus we
 ascend from glory to glory; but the first glory
 that presents itself, is evidently the glory of God,
 as having made us, both body and soul.

(3.) We may well be commanded to remember
 God as our Creator, as his creation of us, or our
 being brought into being by him, is the very root

* Zech. xii. 1,

of all that good we can expect or enjoy from him: If he had not made us, we had been nothing; but having created us, and created us intelligent, incorruptible, and immortal beings, hence it is that we are rendered capable of happiness, the happiness of an acquaintance with God, of conformity and obedience to him, and a blissful, immediate, and everlasting intercourse with him. The joys of communion with God, of glorifying him here on earth, and the joys of the beatific sight and fruition of him in Heaven, would have no place, nothing on which to fix themselves, if God had not first made us, and made us reasonable beings, creatures a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour. Our being is the basis of infinite and immortal happiness, or the spring-head of that manifestative favour of God to his people, which grows larger and larger, and at last issues *in the fulness of joy in his presence, and the everlasting pleasures at his right hand* *.

(4.) Remembering God as our Creator leads us most easily and directly to the inference that we are to serve and honour him, and therefore there is great propriety in its being said, *Remember thy Creator*. Consider God as thy Creator, consider that there is not a part of thy body, nor a faculty of thy soul, but what he has made; and canst thou resist the conclusion that therefore he has a right to command thee, a right to dispose of thee, a right to thine entire and constant obedience? What more clear, what more forcible, than that as he has formed thee, he must have formed thee for himself, and that thou therefore art to shew forth his praise? *Know ye*, says the Psalmist †, *that the Lord he is God. He hath*

* Ps. xvi. 11.

† Ps. c. 2, 3.

*made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him and bless his name. To the same purport it is said, * The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all Gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also: the sea is his for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. O come let us worship, and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand! Whose image and superscription, O man, dost thou bear? Are they not those of that God who is thy Maker? Render therefore unto God the things that are God's. If he has sown the seeds of reason, let him reap the harvest of obedience. If he has made thee both soul and body, devote thy soul and body to him, for canst thou possibly deny that this is thy reasonable service?*

I proceed

II. To open what may be intended by *remembering* our Creator. By *remembering* our Creator we are by no means to understand, that we are only required coldly and speculatively to consider that God is our Creator. This knowledge will do us no good. It is what the devils have, and yet they remain devils still. *Remember thy Creator*, is, in other words, *glorify* and *serve* thy Creator; and that this is the meaning of our text will be evident, if we consider what is imported in Scripture by *forgetting* God, and what by *remembering* him. *Forgetting* God, is not glorifying and serving God; as where it is said, *the wicked*

* Ps. xcv. 3, 7.

shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God, that is all the nations that do not honour and obey him *. And remembering God, is on the other hand glorifying and serving him; as where it is said, *for in death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave who shall give thee thanks?* † that is, all worship and services to thee, as to the present state, will for ever cease when we are no more in this world. Now, if remembering God is thus to glorify and serve him, let us briefly inquire in what manner we are to glorify and serve God, or in what this our duty consists? And

(1.) We should glorify and serve God by acknowledging and adoring him. While we show our regard to creatures according to their ranks and stations, their relations to us, and connexions with us, let us above all acknowledge God, as that God who is the highest of all beings, and with whom we have the chief concern; and let us adore him as the fountain of all life, perfection, and blessedness, so as to view and honour him as our only sovereign, and look to him as our only portion. Let it never be said of us as it was of that profane prince *Belshazzar*, *that the God in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways, we have not glorified* ‡. Let him be our God, and him alone. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve* §.

(2.) We should glorify and serve God by seeking his special favour. It is not only our privilege, but our duty to seek the special favour of God. It is an act of creaturely homage, and it shews not only a sense of our own indigence and impotence, but the sense we have of the power and goodness of God. *Blessed are they that seek*

* Ps. ix. 17.

† Ps. vi. 5.

‡ Dan. v. 25.

§ Matt. iv. 10.

*the Lord with the whole heart *. Seek ye the Lord, and his strength : seek his face evermore †. When thou saidest, says the Psalmist, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. And then he proceeds to plead with God, that he would not hide his face from him, and that he would not put away his servant in anger, neither leave him nor forsake him ‡. Implore that that God who is thy Creator, would be thy covenant God and Father in Jesus Christ, that he would remember thee with that favour which he bears unto his people, that he would visit thee with his salvation, that thou mayest see the good of his chosen, that thou mayest rejoice in the gladness of his nation, and that thou mayest glory with his inheritance ||. True it is that thou hast offended against him, and that thou art destitute of his best and brightest image, a conformity to him in holiness, and therefore make thy humble confessions before him, that he who made thee might have no mercy upon thee, and that he who formed thee might show thee no favour |||; but still, encouraged, allured to come to him by the revelation of himself in his word, in his Son Jesus Christ, entreat that he would be reconciled unto thee, that he would forgive all thy trespasses, that he would receive thee graciously, and love thee freely, and that thou mayest by the merits and mediation of his Son be justified and accepted with him, and that by the communication of his Spirit thou mayest be made like to him, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, and changed into his image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. There are immense treasures of blessings in God, and these blessings are open to*

* Ps. cxix. 2. † Ps. cv. 4. ‡ Ps. xxvii. 8, 9,

|| Ps. cvi. 4, 5. ||| Is. xxvii. 11,

all, free to all who entreat them in the name of Christ. Beg then of God that he would bless thee with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things for his sake, and glorify him by a joyful acceptance of his salvation.

(3.) We should glorify and serve God by surrendering up ourselves to him. We are to give him back his own. *We are to yield up ourselves to him* *. We are to take him for our Lord to be governed and disposed of by him. This is what he requires of us, and herein we shall glorify him, for what greater honour can we give him, than in the gift of our whole selves to him? If we have been rebels, now let us become his subjects and servants, his willing people in the day of his power, and adjoin ourselves to him in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten. Let us count it not only disloyalty, but sacrilege to with-hold ourselves from him. Let his precepts be our study, our delight, and let holiness to the Lord be inscribed upon our whole frame, our bodies and our souls. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service* †.

(4.) We should glorify and serve our God by trusting in him. *We are to commit the keeping of our souls to him in well doing as to a faithful Creator* ‡. Let us honour God by removing our trust from the creature, and centering it upon himself. In all times, in all conditions let us fix the anchor of our hope upon the sure foundations of his covenant-mercy and faithfulness in Christ Jesus. Let us cast all our bur-

* Rom, vi, 13. † Rom, xii, 1. ‡ 1 Pet. iv. 19.

dens upon him, intrust our eternal All in his hands, and resolve with that suffering but yet confiding saint of old, that, *though he slay us yet we will put our trust in him* *. All-sufficiency, infinite love and compassion well deserve our trust, and there only, as our duty as well as our interest, let us fix it. *Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit* †.

(5.) Let us glorify and serve God by taking up our delight in him. Let us view him not only as the Lord whom we are to obey, but as the Father whom we are to love, and in whom we are to take up our rest and happiness. *Delight thyself,* says the Psalmist, *in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart* ‡. Pouring contempt upon the creature, renouncing lying vanities, the broken cisterns of all earthly and created good, let us solace and satisfy ourselves with the infinite fulness of grace and glory in our God, saying with the Psalmist, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none I desire on earth beside thee. My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever* *. In immensity and eternity only let us look for a suitable and adequate happiness for the unbounded desires, and the no less unbounded duration of our souls. I will add,

(6.) And lastly, Let all these sacred and devout affections, and exercises of our souls to-

* Job xiii. 15. † Jer. xvii. 7, 8. ‡ Ps. xxxvii. 4,
§ Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26,

wards God be followed with an humble, close, and chearful walk before him in the paths of obedience. Let our internal piety, like a vigorous and powerful root, break forth into open day, and shew its reality and strength in all manner of holy conversation and godliness. Let it be our great concern, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God. Let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works, and by our glorifying God learn also themselves to glorify our Father which is in Heaven. *Herein, says our Lord, is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples* *. And we are assured, that *whoso offereth praise glorifies God, and that to him who orders his conversation aright God will shew his salvation* †. Our words, our actions, our relations, our connections should all manifest that we are the saints and servants of God, the disciples of Christ, and the citizens of Heaven. We are not to pretend great things, but we are to live them; and if our faces are not to shine as the face of *Moses* with a divine lustre, yet our whole conduct is to be a display of the beauties of holiness, and *as a chosen generation, as a royal priesthood, as an holy nation, and a peculiar people we are to shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light* ‡. And thus have I, though but very briefly, and by no means in such an extent as can do justice to my subject, opened to you what may be intended by *remembering our Creator*; in other words, as I have shown, it is glorifying and serving him, and includes in it the whole of religion. I come,

* John xv. 8.

† Ps. l. 23.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

III. To take notice of the season when we are to remember our Creator, and this is *in the days of our youth*. There is no part of life, after the human mind has begun to open itself, in which it is not our duty to remember our Creator; but the season of youth is here particularly singled out and mentioned as the time of remembering our Creator. *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth*. Our lives are made up of days, little portions of time inclosed between the rising and the setting sun, or between the reign of midnight, and its return upon us in the space of four and twenty hours. Some of these days are the days of infancy, some the days of childhood, some of youth, some of manhood, and some the days of old age, though not many among mankind comparatively attain to this last division of days, for they are much oftener blasted in the bud, withered in the bloom, or violently torn up in the strength and maturity of their years. Now in the days, in the time of youth are we exhorted to remember our Creator, hereby intending either more strictly that season of life in which, having passed childhood, we are growing up to be men, or the space between our ten and twenty years, or upwards; or more largely, all that portion of time from the first openings of reason to our arrival at the manly age. In these days, the first-born of our days, the most sprightly and vigorous of all our days, when nature flourishes in its beauty and bloom, and is not generally oppressed with the cares and burdens of life, and is more commonly free from languors and weakness, enjoying itself in one unclouded sunshine, and if I may so express myself, gaiety of existence; in these days of youth, these days
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that are distinguished from the evil days, and the years when we shall say we have no pleasure in them, in these days, in these smiling, golden, halcyon days of life remember thy Creator. Let the first-fruits of thy time be holiness to the Lord. Let not sin and satan reap the harvest, and gather the vintage, and leave only the stubble and the gleanings to thy God, whose thou art, and whom only, and at all seasons thou art to serve. He desires the first ripe fruit; that fruit do thou, O young man, present unto him. Let him have the youth, the choice of thy time, and, as soon as thou understandest that he is thy Creator, so soon do thou remember him, saying, where is God my Maker? and never resting satisfied till thou art become his subject, his servant, the son of his image, and love, till thou hast a good hope that he is thy God, and that thou art one of his people, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. I proceed,

IV. And lastly, To offer some arguments why we should fall in with the exhortation of our text, to remember our Creator in the days of our youth. Many arguments might be suggested to enforce this duty upon us, but the following shall suffice :

(1.) Let us be excited to remember our Creator in the days of our youth, from the uncertainty of life and health. Young as we are, yet we are not too young to die. *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the spirit of the Lord blows upon it. Surely*
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the

the people is grass *. The grass withers, the flower fades. Not only is the common grass frail and perishing, but the flowers that grow among it, that appear so gay, and paint the meadows with so much beauty, are equally liable to droop and die, and when the scythe comes it makes no distinction between the one and the other. Thus youth with all its bloom and gaiety is exposed to death as well as the other ages of life; and how many thousands and ten thousands of our race have been cut off in the prime of their days? Give God thy Creator then thy youth. Thou knowest not whether thou shalt have any other time to give him. Thy breath is in thy nostrils, and when it is poured out it is at the will of Heaven whether it shall be restored to thee. In the midst of life we are in death. How many have flattered themselves with an old age, who have been in their graves long before they have attained to threescore years and ten? How many have been flourishing in health and vigour one month, one week, one day, one hour, and have been breathless corpses in the next? *Thou knowest not what shall be on the morrow. For what is our life? It is even as a vapour that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away* †. The thread of life is in the hands of God, and he may cut it asunder the next moment. Remember thy Creator then in the days of thy youth.

(2.) Let us be persuaded to remember our Creator in the days of our youth from the present pleasures of a life of religion. Religion may have been represented as something very gloomy and forbidding, as if it were utterly inconsistent with, and indeed unfriendly to the en-

* Isaiah xl. 6.

† James iv. 13, 14.

joyment of life; but all this is imagination, prejudice, and falshood. Nothing on the other hand so much conduces to true peace and comfort as real piety. This opens a communion between God and our souls; this leads the soul to a rest and delight of itself in him; this regulates our passions, bridles our appetites, and yet gives us all things to enjoy so far as is consistent with our true happiness; this sanctifies every thing to us, and gives us the smiles of our God with the bounties of his providence; this enlightens adversity, and gives the richest relish to prosperity. O how true is it *that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace**? *That in the way of righteousness is life, and that in the path-way thereof there is no death*†? *That in keeping God's commandments there is a great reward*‡? *And that great peace have they that love God's law, and nothing shall offend them*§? Let me only instance in a few particulars. Has a man any terror upon his soul for falling down upon his knees day by day, and adoring, and blessing his God, and entreating his favour? Has a man any distress of mind for doing justly and loving mercy? Is it any anguish to him that he eats and drinks so much only as tends to the support and refreshment of his nature, and no further? Or does he feel any secret remorse and stings of conscience that he has not been seduced by the harlot, but that he walks within the inclosures which God in equal love and wisdom has appointed? So far from this, that a life under the regulations of religion is a life of peace and pleasure. Religion grants us every thing that is truly for our

* Prov. iii. 17.
§ Ps. cxix. 15.

† Prov. xiii. 28.

‡ Ps. xix. 11,

good, and forbids us nothing but what is for our hurt; and the commands of God include our own interests in them not only for the future, but for the present life; so that in one word, religion is the health and enjoyment of our souls, and sin their pain and disease. As therefore you consult your own present comfort remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

(3.) And lastly, Let us be prevailed upon to remember our Creator in the days of our youth from a regard to our future felicity. As we are creatures raised above the brutes in the capacities which God has given us of fore-sight, and an attention to things to come, let these capacities be improved by us, and let our views of futurity accordingly now influence and operate upon our minds. A dying hour will come, and it may be very near. Who is prepared for his dying hour? A saint, or a sinner? One who fears God? Or one who fears him not? Will it be any consolation to us in the agonies of dissolving nature that we have forgotten God, renounced him, said to him in our practical course, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thee, nor of thy ways? When we are called to tread the dark solitary valley of the shadow of death, and no other friend can support and comfort us, will it be found that we have consulted our interest in that we have made God our enemy; or will it be any wonder that he whom we have disobeyed and dishonoured in life should leave us to the punishment of our sins, and to the horrors of his dereliction and frowns in death? And, believe me, one hour's anguish without an hope in God in death will heavily overbalance all the unlawful pleasures of sin in life. But on the other hand, if we remember

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our Creator in the days of our youth, may we not encourage ourselves in the hope that he will remember us when we shall stand in so much need of his favour in the article of death? May we not expect that he will then succour and cheer us with his promises, with his spirit, and raise us *when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death above the fear of evil, vouchsafing his presence to us, and by his rod and staff, as our good shepherd, comforting us**, till, having passed in safety and pleasure the otherwise gloomy and tremendous passage, we are safe arrived at the mansions of eternal blessedness and glory? *Mansions of eternal blessedness and glory!* To whom do they belong? Not to thee, O sinner, who turnest thyself away from God, tramplest upon his laws, abusest his love. No; to thee belong indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, a banishment from the blissful presence of God, and the pains and punishment of an eternal hell. But these mansions of eternal glory and blessedness are the sure and only inheritance of such as have acknowledged, adored, loved, and served their God, and if *as one star differs from another star in glory so it will be at the resurrection of the dead†*, how bright will those morning stars be seen in the kingdom of their Father, who have remembered their Creator in the days of their youth? O then let a regard to our future felicity excite us to remember our Creator in the days of our youth, and, as ever we would have death disarmed, nay, would have his pale face enlightened with the light of life, and eternity prove to us not a bottomless gulf of misery, but an ocean of infinite happiness, let us now remember God, now glorify and serve him.

* Ps. xxiii. 4.

† 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42.

Having

Having finished the doctrinal part of my subject I might now improve and apply it; but I shall rather hold up to you an example of his remembrance of his Creator in the days of his youth in the late *Mr. Thomas Wilton*, a young man for several years an honourable member of this church, and whose death has occasioned the present discourse.

His worthy brother, and my esteemed friend, *Dr. Samuel Wilton* has put into my hands some particulars relating to the life and death of the deceased, which he tells me, “He has just
“ sketched out in a rough form to make use of
“ as I think proper, begging me to consider all
“ that is his own, as nothing more than hints,
“ and not intended as a finished account fit to be
“ delivered in its present state, and that all he
“ means by it is to supply me with some materials, the wording and arranging of which he
“ has left intirely to myself.” On my perusal of these papers there appears to be such a genuine and lively draught of his brother’s character, and such a moving, melting, and yet delightful and edifying view of him upon his death-bed, that I shall take the liberty to present the papers to you as they were delivered to me, as I know not how better to express myself in any words of my own, or cast them into any better mould than that in which I received them.

The first paper is thus intitled:

“ Some few anecdotes respecting the life
“ and death of my dear brother,” and is as follows.

“ It might perhaps as properly be said of
“ him as of any person whatsoever that he was
“ sanctified from the womb, as he very early
“ disco-

“ discovered the influence of religious principles on his mind, particularly in the conscientious and constant practise of secret prayer, which, as he grew up, became his growing pleasure—in the most religious observation of the Lord’s Day—in his invariable attachment to truth in all he said—and in the most scrupulous regard to the strictest integrity and honesty in all his transactions and intercourse with mankind; of which I could recite some very remarkable instances even in his childhood. Indeed, he had the tenderest conscience I ever knew any person to be possessed of, even so far as often to fear the contraction of guilt where no fear was.

“ The cultivation of his mind was the principal object of his attention, and he looked with a sovereign contempt on those pursuits, which too often engross the attention and time of young persons in this dissipated age. The uncommon solidity of his judgment, and his rectitude of taste led him to improve all the time he could redeem from business in reading, either with a view to the general improvement of his mind, by cultivating an acquaintance with those branches of science for which he had a strong relish; or more especially in reference to the growth of grace, and the advancement of religion in his soul.

“ But as it pleased God thus early to work on his mind by a blessing upon a religious education, the change was less perceptible in him than in the conversion of those who are left to a course of profligacy and open immorality. Hence he was often led to question the reality of a saving change in himself, when it was unquestionable to every one else

“ who

“ who knew him; and the natural timid dispo-
 “ sition of his mind inclined him to indulge
 “ the most unfavourable thoughts of himself,
 “ till at length he was involved in the greatest
 “ perplexity and distress of mind, and about
 “ eight years ago sank into a religious melan-
 “ choly, considering himself as utterly lost, and
 “ undone, and as having contracted the guilt of
 “ an hypocritical profession of religion, while he
 “ was nothing more than a mere nominal pro-
 “ fessor. During this unhappy period he often
 “ told me that he envied the vilest reptile that
 “ crept upon the earth. Upon this occasion I
 “ conversed much with him, prevailed upon
 “ him to come to my house for a time, and
 “ preached some sermons while he was with me
 “ with a particular reference to the disconsolate
 “ state of his mind. It pleased God to bless
 “ them so far as to mitigate his anxiety; though
 “ he was never wholly exempt from doubts
 “ till his last illness, which was uncommon-
 “ ly painful. But, as it was productive of
 “ the long desired effect, he often expressed his
 “ thankfulness to God for it, and declared that
 “ he would not have been without it for all the
 “ world. A few days before the opening of his
 “ abscess he said to me, that he was not without
 “ a good hope, yet it did not rise to full assu-
 “ rance—that that was all that he wanted, and
 “ that could he but attain that, which some
 “ other Christians had attained, he should be
 “ perfectly easy as to the precarious issue of the
 “ operation. When it pleased God to fulfil his
 “ desire, he said, I consider this affliction as an
 “ immediate and most gracious answer to my
 “ own repeated prayer. I have often declared
 “ in secret that I should be content to bear
 “ the

“ the heaviest affliction which my heavenly Fa-
 “ ther would lay upon me, so that it might but
 “ be the means of affording me a satisfying evi-
 “ dence of my interest in the blessings of the
 “ New Covenant, and now, said he, God has
 “ indeed answered my prayer. During his long
 “ continued and severe illness he enjoyed almost
 “ uninterrupted comfort, and triumphed in the
 “ name of *Jesus*; though at some times he in-
 “ timated that the enemy of souls was aiming to
 “ disturb his peace. He bore his sufferings
 “ with a degree of Christian patience seldom to
 “ be paralleled. Not one repining word ever
 “ dropped from his lips; and he often disco-
 “ vered the most extatic triumphs of true faith.
 “ He uniformly acknowledged his obligations
 “ to free grace for all he was, and all he en-
 “ joyed; and was frequently very express and
 “ ardent in avowing the doctrines of the atone-
 “ ment and righteousness of Christ, as the only
 “ and immoveable basis of his hope. Few dying
 “ beds were ever so instructive, establishing, and
 “ comforting as his was to the spectators of his
 “ sufferings and his joys. Free grace, and the
 “ merits of *Jesus* were the constant delightful
 “ topics of his conversation. The three inter-
 “ views which he had with his aged and hon-
 “ oured father just before he died presented a
 “ scene too moving to be described. His af-
 “ fectionate addresses to his venerable parent,
 “ and lively expressions of an assured hope of
 “ soon meeting him again in heaven overcame
 “ us all. At length, after a very short and easy
 “ conflict with the pains of the dissolving union
 “ between soul and body he sweetly fell asleep
 “ in *Jesus* without a sigh or groan, with his
 E “ hand

“ hand in mine, *August 5. 1776.* Blessed indeed
“ are the dead who thus die in the Lord.

“ I may truly add to what I have already said
“ concerning my dear brother that he was a
“ most dutiful child to his parents, and a most
“ affectionate brother. Our affection was never
“ once interrupted to his dying hour. He dis-
“ covered his love to me all his life long, and
“ could not bear my absence from him in the
“ approach of death.

“ In his religious sentiments as to the points
“ of difference among Christians, he was a
“ thorough *Calvinist* upon conviction, and after
“ close examination; and he laid a great stress
“ upon some of the peculiar doctrines of the
“ gospel in all his conversations during his last
“ illness.

“ He was also a steady Dissenter upon princi-
“ ple: he had accurately studied the controver-
“ sy relating to *conformity, and nonconformity,*
“ and his preference of the latter was the re-
“ sult of a firm persuasion that it was grounded
“ upon scriptural principles, and a necessary
“ expression of his due allegiance to Christ, as
“ the sole Head and Lawgiver of his church.

“ His diffidence and modesty threw a veil
“ upon his gifts and accomplishments. This
“ made him averse to engaging in social prayer,
“ unless there were none but his own servants
“ present; but he had notwithstanding a very
“ uncommon gift in prayer, far beyond what
“ is common not only among *Lay-Christians,* but
“ *Ministers* themselves.

“ He was very fond of retirement from the
“ world, and chose rather to be considered as
“ singular, than to injure his best interest in

“ any degree by a greater conformity to the
“ customs of the world.

“ His courteous manners and obliging car-
“ riage were well known to all his friends and
“ indeed to all with whom he was connected.”

The next paper put into my hands is thus
prefaced, and is as follows :

“ The underwritten are very few compara-
“ tively of the weighty sentences which dropped
“ from my brother's lips. A great number have
“ escaped recollection, which were uttered in
“ the earlier stages of his disorder, when his
“ friends flattered themselves with the hope of
“ his recovery ; and many more I did not choose
“ to insert, which, as I did not hear myself,
“ and could not depend upon to be exactly re-
“ lated, might have been considered as less au-
“ thentic.”

Sayings in his last illness.

“ Describing at one time his own state, he
“ said, I have a peaceful conscience, and a
“ smiling God.

“ O my God, look upon my affliction, and
“ pity me ; for thou *hast* forgiven me mine ini-
“ quities.”

“ If Satan should accuse me, and tempt me
“ to despair, I will send him to my *Jesus* who
“ cancelled my guilt in his own blood. He
“ loved me and gave himself for me.”

At another time, when I had been praying
with him, he said, “ I thank you, my dearest
“ brother. Your prayers, and conversation,

“ and preaching have often been greatly blessed
 “ to me. I will tell it you ; I must tell it you,
 “ for your encouragement. O my dear bro-
 “ ther, go on to preach *Jesus Christ* to poor sin-
 “ ners. Preach him for his own sake. Preach
 “ him for their sakes. Preach him for my sake.
 “ If you love me preach him. I never knew so
 “ much of his worth and preciousness before.
 “ He is, indeed he is, an Almighty, and All-
 “ sufficient Saviour.”

“ O, if it were the will of God I wish that
 “ the sun might this day shine on my breathless
 “ corpse, for I know that my sins are pardoned!
 “ God is my God, my covenant and reconciled
 “ God through *Jesus Christ*. I know that when
 “ he takes me hence, he will take me to him-
 “ self. I long to be at home.”

“ O that he would send some kind angel to
 “ release me ! But I am afraid this is murmur-
 “ ing. I would not murmur. All is mercy on
 “ this side hell. Wherefore should a living man
 “ complain, a man for the punishment of his
 “ sins !”

After crying out in extreme anguish, he broke
 out with great fervour,

“ The sharpest sufferings that I bear

“ Flow from my faithful father’s care. *”

“ How dreadful would be my case, if I had
 “ now to conflict with the agonizing pains of
 “ an accusing and condemning conscience ! I
 “ bless God I have none of them. I could
 “ now lie down and die with as much compo-
 “ sure, as I lay my head down on this pillow.”

“ They sleep in Jesus and are blest †.”

* Somewhat altered from Dr. Watts’s Imitation of the
 Psalms, Ps. cxix, fourteenth part, stanza the fifth.

† Dr. Watts’s Hymns, B. 1. Hymn 18.

He was often expressing his thankful admiration of the delightful contrast between his former doubting, fearful temper, and his present peace and comfort. Addressing himself to me, he said, ; “ You, I dare say, never expected to “ see me in such a frame as this. I am sure I “ never expected it, I never thought that I “ could look death in the face with so much “ composure and fortitude ; but what cannot “ God do ? It is all of him.” And then he broke out into the warmest expressions of love and gratitude to God, and expatiated largely on his obligations to the free grace of God in Christ *Jesus*, extolling the name of *Jesus* as a saviour, and triumphing in the persuasion of the efficacy of his atoning blood.

With great extasy did he often repeat those hymns of *Dr. Watts*,

Come we that love the Lord,
And let our joys be known ;
Join in a song with sweet accord,
And thus surround the throne. &c. *

And must this body die ?
This mortal frame decay ?
And must these active limbs of mine
Lie mould’ring in the clay ? &c. †

As also that stanza in *Dr. Watts’s Horæ Lyricæ*,

Come, saints, and drop a tear or two
On the dear bosom of your God :
He shed a thousand drops for you,
A thousand drops of richer blood. ‡

* *Dr. Watts’s Hymns*, B. 2. Hymn 30.

† *Dr. Watts’s Hymns*, B. 2. Hymn 110.

‡ B. 1. P. 72. Stanza 2. Edit. 9.

And

And also those lines by a minister of Scotland *,

Come, stingless death, have o'er. Lo ! here's my pass
In blood character'd by his hand who was,
And is, and shall be. *Jordan*, cut thy stream,
Make channels dry. I bear my Father's name
Stamp'd on my brow. I'm ravish'd with my crown
It shines so bright. Down with all glory down
The world can give. I see the pearly port,
The golden streets, the blessed souls resort,
The trees of life, floods gushing from the throne,
Call me to joys. Begone, short woes, begone.
I liv'd to die ; but now I die to live ;
I do enjoy more than I could believe :
The promise me into possession sends,
And faith in fight, and hope in having ends.

July 30. When he was speaking of the great pains he felt, I said, " But I hope your faith remains as firm and unshaken as ever." He replied, " O yes ! though sometimes the adversary tries to disturb my peace ; but, blessed be God, he never prevails."

July 31. When one of his relations sympathized with him under his severe pains, he answered ; " I would not exchange my condition with any man in the world. My happiness is as compleat as it can be on this side the grave. I would not have been without this affliction for all the world."

August 3. When I asked him whether he continued in the same comfortable state of mind, he answered in rapture, " O, yes ! it is heaven within."

Upon my observing to him that his dying before me was not only a very painful, but a very unexpected event to me, as I hoped he would have survived me many years ; his remark

* The Rev. Mr. M'Lellen of Kircudbright.

" was,

was, " But I am glad it is so, for I could not
 " have borne to have had you gone before me ;
 " and, though I love you as well as ever, yet it
 " does not grieve me so much now to part with
 " my friends as it would have done some months
 " since, when I had my fears, that after all, I
 " should go to Hell, and never meet them again
 " in Heaven. The persuasion I now have of
 " soon meeting and enjoying you in Heaven,
 " reconciles me to the thought of leaving
 " you."

After some little conversation with his honoured
 father on the subjects of death and immorta-
 lity, he broke out in rapture,

For when grim death has lost its sting

It wears an angel's face *.

A little afterwards he said to me,

" How precious is Christ now to believers !"

August 4. He said, " I wish I was gone : I
 " long to be gone."

Afterwards he softly whispered to me as fol-
 lows, " I wish I was capable of talking, I could
 " say a great deal more than ever. I never had
 " such views and sensations in all my life.
 " You cannot conceive how I am, but I cannot
 " talk."

In the evening he thus addressed me, " O my
 " dear brother, I am quite overcome"—Here
 he paused—I said, " With what, my dear bro-
 " ther?" He replied, " With spiritual joy and
 " comfort. If God do not loose me soon, I
 " cannot support it."

A little afterwards, when I was sitting by his
 bed-side, he said to me, " You do not go home
 " to-night, do you?" I replied, No, I will not
 " leave you." " I am glad of that, said he,

* Watts's *Horæ Lyricæ*, B. 1. P. 43. Stanza 3.

" for

“ for I would fain have *you* stay to see me close
 “ my eyes, and fall asleep in *Jesus*.”

Afterwards every now and then he cried,
 “ Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

August 5. In the morning he told me,
 “ That his whole frame was then so disordered
 “ and sunk, that he could not enjoy, or ex-
 “ press himself as he had done before, but that
 “ he was the same within.” He likewise inti-
 mated his apprehension that the enemy of souls
 might perhaps take advantage of his increased
 weakness, and herein he was not mistaken, for
 soon after he was for a short time disposed to
 indulge a fear lest after all he should miscarry.

“ What, said he, if I should be deceived.”

Afterwards when I asked him, “ How it was
 with him?” he answered, “ *Pretty comfortable*.

“ I wish I had formerly longed for Heaven more
 “ as a state of perfect holiness, as well as a state
 “ of perfect happiness, though I hope I did re-
 “ joice in that view of it too.” Afterwards he

told me, “ that Satan had been very busy in en-
 “ deavouring to unfasten him, but that Jesus

“ was his hope.” However the cloud was soon
 “ dispelled. In about two hours after he told

me, “ He was very comfortable, and growing
 more and more so.” But he was now so low and

weak that compassion to his frame restrained
 me from saying much to him, especially by way

of question. He faintly whispered, “ that though
 “ he could not talk, he wished we would.” And

just before the last conflict he said to a friend,
 who stood by his bed-side, “ Come, let us talk

“ of the good land, and of the promises. I love
 “ to hear of them.” After this he several times

attempted to say something to me, but he was
 unable to utter any more than, “ O my dear

“ bro-

“ brother,” with a pause, and then “ I cannot say it.” Finding him thus incapable of any farther converse, I desired “ that if he had then the same peace and joy he had formerly expressed, he would testify it by holding up his hand.” On which he lifted it up, and gave me a most significant look.

I will add to this account given by the brother of our deceased friend that it perfectly corresponds with what he said to me in the many visits I made him in the season of his illness. Never did I see a serener or happier death-bed. He declared to me, “ that he had faith, the faith of assurance, and that that was the top of all. I remember, said he, how the thoughts of death made me shudder, but it is otherwise with me now.” Grace was the delightful subject of his praise. Not one complaint, not one murmur did I ever hear him utter as to the dispensations of God towards him, though he must in his long and most distressing illness have endured a martyrdom, may I not more truly say many martyrdoms of pain? He told me “ that he had been before his affliction dull and languid in spirituals, and that he had earnestly prayed that God would quicken him, and that he had now answered his prayers.” Indeed he seemed to be full of hope, full of peace, full of submission, and in a word, full of his God. And, notwithstanding in the several times of my visiting him, I observed there were vicissitudes in his natural spirits, as he sometimes spoke more and sometimes less, or almost declined to speak at all, yet the Heaven within seemed to know no changes. Shall I add, that he expressed a most affectionate regard for the best interests of

such as were dear to him, and spoke with great honour and delight of the power of the divine life in an intimate friend of his, with whom he had often taken sweet counsel*.

Here is a subject that might be variously and largely improved, but I despair to do justice to it; were I not to cease my address to you, till I had done it, midnight might come upon us, and still hear me speaking. However something I will offer by way of improvement, however inadequate and defective.

* If not as a farther testimonial to the excellency of *Mr. Wilton's* character, for there is no need of any fresh evidence, where the thing was known more or less to all who knew him, yet as a proof how most dear and delightful he was to those who were perfectly acquainted with him, I shall transcribe part of a letter from a long and intimate friend of the deceased, written the very day he received the news of *Mr. Wilton's* death. "Though my dear friend's death has been
 " so long the object of expectation, yet when the news arrived, I felt the stroke very heavy upon me. O, my dear departed friend! This world, the church of God, and
 " thy afflicted parents, relations and friends, can ill spare thee. Thou hast passed the river; thou hast begun happiness everlasting. Thy conflicts and struggles are for
 " ever over. Thou art receiving thine eternal reward. Thou hast bid a final adieu to sins and sorrows. Thy precious
 " dust sleeps in *Jesus*, and is released from all agonizing pains of disease and death, and waits the sound of the
 " last trumpet to raise it incorruptible. Have I parted with thee never to meet thee more? Shall I ever again
 " join hands with thee? Shall we congratulate one another in the realms of glory? Shall I ever join in the ascriptions of praise, in the song of *Moses*, and the *Lamb*?
 " O that I might receive the falling mantle of the departed *Elijah*! O that I might feel more of that heavenly mind, that tender conscience, that devotional spirit, those ardent desires and eager pursuits of eternal
 " blessings which he felt. That I might walk with that circumspection with which he walked, that holy tenderness of conscience against all sin, and earnest desires to
 " be freed from the burden of it, that humble mind, that warm heart for God and Christ! O that I might partake
 " of the same Spirit!"

If we consider our deceased brother, in what has been related concerning him, living and dying, we shall

I. Behold an eminent instance of divine power and grace. He was good betimes. The seeds of reason and religion broke out, as it were, together. He spent his days in one tenor of holiness without any interruptions, any departures from the good ways of the Lord, and having begun in the spirit, he walked in the spirit, or rather through all his time on earth, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And whence was all this? Was it not from above? Was it not a good and perfect gift that descended from the Father of lights, who made the soul of our friend a chosen vessel, who purified it for himself, and filled it with his heavenly treasures? It is the work of God, be it in earlier or later days, *to create in us clean hearts, and renew within us right spirits* *, and for this so great and blessed experience, we are to cry out, Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise. *If instead of the thorn there comes up the fir-tree, and if instead of the brier there comes up the myrtle tree, let us remember that they are to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off* †. And none was more ready to acknowledge, and adore the grace of God towards him than our deceased friend. This was the song with which he entered the dark valley, and in what nobler strains is he now celebrating the divine mercy towards him, and will celebrate it through the days of eternity?

* Psal. li. 10.

† Isa. lv. 13.

II. Hence we may observe the excellency of religion. How amiable, how delightful was our deceased friend? He was no pricking brier, no grieving thorn, no nuisance and distress to those who were intimately connected with and concerned for him, but he was an honour and a blessing to his family, and, like the vine in the parable *, his *fruit cheered both God and man*. Such is the excellency of religion. It is the want of religion, and the reign of sin which produce the dreadful miseries of families, societies, and kingdoms. Was there but religion universally spreading, what comforts and joys would every where accompany it, and how would our world, now too much like a wilderness and desert, become a second *Eden*, a garden and paradise of God! And particularly how happy would families become! We should no more hear of parents weeping, mourning over their disobedient children, no more hear of their hoary heads going down with sorrow to their graves for the impiety, the profligacy, and impudence in sin of their offspring; but, if young persons were but of the spirit of our deceased friend, how would parents, brethren, sisters rejoice, and how would their songs of praise and salvation be heard in the tabernacles of the righteous! Our families would be *Bethels*, houses of God, and the gates of heaven. Such is the excellency of religion! Religion so much neglected, so much despised, so much trampled upon in our wicked, wicked times, but still it is the honour, the happiness of our natures; and if men had a right knowledge and sense of things, we should have no more difficulty to persuade them that an holy temper and life were preferable to a temper and life wicked, and dissolute, than that "it was

* Judg. ix. 13.

better to be in ease than pain, in health than sickness, or better to have the body pure and whole, than over-run with wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.

III. May we not hence see the noble spirit of the truly good man! How did our deceased friend welcome his trial, bless God for his trials, so that he could but enjoy a greater nearness to him, the unclouded light of his countenance. No matter if the body is disordered, emaciated, and made the seat of disease and pain, if God is but more sensibly and comfortably experienced in the manifestations of his love. With a truly pious soul, religion, conformity to God, and communion with him is all, and nothing is thought too great a sacrifice for such an inward, inestimable blessing, as the peace that passes all understanding, as that well of water that springs up to everlasting life. What a right judgment and proper estimate of things are here? *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal**. It is a good sign of the principle, and power of grace, when what is spiritual and eternal is preferred to what is temporary and terrestrial; and when we account an accession in grace and holiness, more of God's image, more of his love happily obtained though by the means of the heaviest pressure and sharpest pains of our bodies. Such was the temper of our departed friend!

* 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.

IV. May we not learn from the doubts and fears with which our worthy brother was perplexed and darkened for a time that there may be the true work of grace on the soul without the light and joys of assurance? What bright and strong proofs did he give that he was a child of God, a partaker of his Spirit from his earliest days, and yet with all this evidence to others that he was a saint, and an eminent young saint, he was in great darkness and distress for a time himself, and seemed even to part with the anchor of his hope? Do not conclude that where there is the work of grace, there must ever be the discovery of it to the soul. It is in God's light that we see light. As our good friend observed, "assurance is the top of faith," it is the rich blossom or the ripe fruit, while the root lies as it were under ground, and unseen. First the Spirit of God renews and sanctifies, and then he seals and comforts. *In whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*. And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever†.*

V. We may observe from the peace and pleasures which our deceased friend enjoyed in the last days of his life that God gave him his consolations when they were most needed. Affliction comes, pain comes, the heralds of death come, death himself comes, and now the cloud that once sat like the shadow of death upon his soul is all dispersed; he is set at liberty, he has a song of praise put into his mouth, even of salvation to his God, and he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The best wine is

* Eph. i. 13.

† Isa. xxxii. 18.

reserved for the last, a wine so rich and delightful, that it is in kind none other than the new wine of the kingdom. Let this instance encourage us still to wait upon God, still to cleave to him, still to walk with him, though he may for a time hide himself from us. *The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry* *. Though the day may have been dim, if not even dark, yet God may fulfil his promise, and how often has he done it to his afflicted people, *that at evening time it shall be light* ? †

VI. We may hence be taught that whom the Lord loves he chastens. Thus scripture declares ‡, and thus the case of our pious brother evinces. Sharp, very sharp, long, very long were his afflictions. He underwent at times the most acute and excruciating pains, and not only hours and days, but even months of languishing and sorrow were appointed him, and yet he was without question a *Jedediah* ||, one beloved of the Lord, one peculiarly dear to him. It was no base metal; it was silver, it was gold that was now in the furnace. Do not conclude that you are the children of God, the favourites of heaven, because you are not in affliction and trouble. A smooth serene stream may waft you to the gulf of hell. And do not infer, because you meet with much tribulation, that therefore God has no special love to you, or he would not suffer you to be thus heavily afflicted. *Because he loves you he may chasten you, that his grace and his strength may be manifested in you.* O

* Habak. ii. 3.
|| 2 Sam. xii. 25.

† Zech. xiv. 7.

‡ Heb. xii. 6.

how much better to be pruned with the vine, though we bleed with the stroke, that we may bear much fruit, and that the odours of our graces may become the more fragrant and diffusive, than to be left neglected with *the bramble, that is nigh unto cursing, and whose end is to be burned* * !

These are the general remarks that may be made as an improvement of the life and death of our deceased brother. Shall I now derive from the Providence some instructions for particular persons ?

I. Let me address myself to you his dear parents †. And consider, my friends, the high honour conferred upon you in being the parents of a son so exemplary and ornamental in our world, so comfortable and triumphant in death, and now the inheritor of life everlasting. Surely one of the highest privileges that God can bestow upon us next to that of our own salvation, is that of being blessed with children to glorify God on earth, and to be happy with him in heaven. This is your felicity. You planted, you watered, and God gave the increase, and now he has commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. Say not that you had rather have gone before your son, than to have staid behind to have wept for him, and followed him. The grand essential is secure, your son's salvation ; and what is it but a mere circumstantial, whether he or you first arrive at the celestial blessedness ? You are set free from one strong tie to earth, and you have one more argument to allure and at-

* Heb. vi. 8.

† *Mr. Wilton*, the father, was not able by weakness and disorder, to attend the funeral discourse, but *Mrs. Wilton*, the mother, was present when it was preached.

tach

teach your hearts to heaven. You have had a son who has taught you to die, and shewn you that there is not that terror in death you may have been apt to conceive; or that all its darkness may be scattered by a ray from the excellent glory, and that what has been the privilege of the son, may be the experience of the parents. He has by faith shaken off the viper, and felt no harm; or rather he has put his hand on the hole of the asp, and entered into the basilisk's den, and has triumphed over them: O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Encourage, comfort yourselves that this is your God; and rely on the same strength, and the same grace to support you by the way, and make you conquerors, yea, and more than conquerors at the end. It will be but a little time, and I trust you shall meet your dear departed son in glory. How much greater then your reason for joy than sorrow? And how much pleasure should it yield you that your dear branch is not lost, but only transplanted a little before you from the nursery of the church below, to flourish in immortal life and glory in the paradise of your God above; where that which is perfect is come, and that which is in part is done away.

II. Let me speak a few words to you the brethren and sisters of the deceased. And let me entreat you by all that is dear and happy to you, to follow his steps, and particularly show your love to him by walking also as he walked, that you may ere long attain to the same heaven, which I doubt not has received him, and there renew your society and friendship with him to inconceivable advantage, never to be divided more. Would it not be a thought that would

cut you with severe anguish, if you were sure that you should never see your brother again? But would it not fill you with overwhelming amazement and terror, if though you were sure that you should see your brother again, yet that it would be while he was at the right hand of Christ at the great day, while you were doomed to the left; or when he was in *Abraham's* bosom, and you were miserable in everlasting burnings? Take then, pursue then, I most earnestly beseech you, the same path which he trod, the way everlasting, the strait and narrow road that leads to life. And O that the life and death of the brother, whom I doubt not you most tenderly loved, may quicken you in your preparation for eternity! Is not this lesson written deep and strong in his ashes, *Be ye also ready?* O that since the branch which grew so near you, one of your number, is taken away, though only to be inserted into a better soil, and to flourish in a kinder climate, you may live in constant expectation of a like removal! And may you, like him, honour your God on earth, enjoy his presence in death, and have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of your Lord and Saviour!

I might here particularly address myself to you the brother, and properly the only brother of the deceased*. And allow me to say to you, my dear friend, and brother in the ministry of the gospel, set out in your master's work with double vigour and zeal. Let the remembrance of your brother, what he was in life, what he was in death, what he is now in heaven, an angel of light, an inhabitant of the praises and glories of a blessed eternity, incite you, animate you to be

* The other brothers were brothers by marriage, this only the son of the same parents with the deceased.

instant in season, and out of season, and to labour with all your heart and strength in the service of your Lord, and for the salvation of souls. And may God eminently succeed your sacred endeavours, and as he has distinguished you in many respects with his favour already, may he still delight over you to do you good; and in the new situation where his providence has placed you *, may you see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in your hands, and have many souls born to God, or trained up, and educated for heaven under your ministry, that shall be your joy, and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord!

III. Let me address myself to this church, of which our deceased friend was for several years, a worthy and honourable member†. And let me congratulate you that we have been so long favoured with so eminently a pious person among us. We have had in him no thorn or brier, no broad spreading but vain gourd, that came up in a night, and perished in a night; but a plant of renown, a tree of righteousness in which God has been glorified. Such persons, such young persons, how do they adorn the church of God while living, and how sweet their remembrance when they are no more with us! O for more and more of them, till there is not one of our families but has its whole number of the rising generation joined to the Lord, and to his church; that so our households may be nurseries for the church, and our church a nursery

* That of pastor of the church at the *Weigh-House, East-Cheap, London*, in the room of the late excellent *Dr. William Langford*.

† He was admitted, together with his sister *Mrs. Mary Wilton*, now *Parker*, into the church at *Haberdashers-Hall*, Feb. 1, 1765. and was above eleven years a member there.

for heaven! Farther may it not justly afford us a pleasure, that our deceased brother, as I am well persuaded he did, has offered up so many pious prayers for his minister, and the people of his charge? The Lord grant they may descend upon us in abundant showers of blessings, now he is gone from us, and has exchanged the voice of prayer for the songs of everlasting praise! Let me add, O that we may be all instructed and quickened by the holy example our brother hath set us both living and dying! Let us go and do likewise! Let us in like manner serve our generation according to the will of God! And O that all of us were as conscientious, as inward in religion, as deeply sanctified, as evangelical, as holy, and heavenly as he was, that so this church may look forth like the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and, if not terrible as an army with banners, yet glorious with the beauties of holiness upon it, and a living likeness of the true church of God, that, described under the similitude of a woman, is said *to be clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars* *, having nothing opaque and terrene, but every thing bright and celestial about her.

IV. Can I restrain myself on this occasion from speaking particularly to young people? And let me beg of you to be followers of our dear young friend, as he was a follower of Christ Jesus. Do not give your days, the days of your childhood and youth to sin and Satan, but give them to God. *Remember your Creator*, remember him now, and postpone not religion, your prime interest, to an uncertain hereafter. Do not be carried down the stream of general corruption;

* Rev. xii. 1.

if you are, know assuredly that you are in that dreadful tide, which will empty itself into that lake that burns with fire and brimstone. You will one day wish, perhaps you have already formed the wish, to die the death of the righteous. O then live, live betimes the life of the righteous! My dear children, my dear youth, of whom I travail in birth till Christ is formed in you, fulfil ye my joy. Know the God of your fathers. Choose him for your God. Do not paint religion as somewhat black and frightful. She is an angel of light, and give her but your heart and hand, and she will conduct you to eternal glory. Here was a young person, good betimes, he feared God from his childhood and youth. You see his honourable life. You see his happy end. O may you have a portion of the same spirit poured out upon you, and seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near, for now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation.

I shall now only add, that methinks I would not have one person this day depart from this assembly, and close this solemn sacred season, without being something the better. *It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart* *. Be ye sinners, be ye saints, be ye young, be ye old, hear, O hear our brother speaking to you from the grave, and bidding you not trust to the reed of life, even with all the advantages of youth, of temperance, and sobriety to strengthen and support it. He has paid the debt of nature, or rather of sin, and how soon your turn may come you know not. I am persuaded, was he permitted to speak

* Eccl. vii. 2.

to you from heaven, that he would say to you;
 “ Be humble, and penitent for your sins, as God
 “ enabled me to be for mine; intrust your
 “ whole salvation to Jesus Christ, as I did; and
 “ study holiness, follow holiness, this is the
 “ way, the only way to heaven.”

I will close all with a word of consolation, and that shall be taken from the divine oracles, that I may not leave the cloud of death, that now overshadows us, without that brightness which the gospel affords. *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

* 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14, 18.

*Early Remembrance of GOD enforced
and exemplified.*

ECCLESIASTES XII. I.

A N H Y M N.

*G*OD thy Creator, who from dust
Built thy corporeal frame;
God thy Creator, from whose breath
Th' immortal spirit came;

2.

Him call to mind, admire, adore,
And seek with all thy soul,
And on his boundless pow'r and love
Thine ev'ry int'rest roll.

3.

To him surrender up thine All
To do, and bear his will;
And ev'ry precept he has giv'n
With all thy might fulfil.

4.

Let him be thy supreme delight,
An ocean unconfin'd,
Unfathom'd, that alone can fill
The wishes of thy mind.

5.

All this perform in youth's gay bloom,
While through th' exulting veins
The tide of life in all its joy,
In all its vigour reigns:

6. Thus

6.

Thus shalt thou be alike prepar'd
For a long stay below ;
Or to th' unbounded blifs above
In life's young morning go.

7.

Such was the faint, whose loss we mourn .
He in his earliest days
Remember'd his Creator, God,
And spoke, and liv'd his praise.

8.

Behold his spirit mounts on high,
And joins the blifsful choir ;
Creating pow'r, redeeming grace
Th' eternal song inspire.

9.

No more he wrestles with his fears,
No more is rackt with pains :
But joy unmeasurable flows,
And endless pleasure reigns.

10.

Then why these melancholy thoughts
That round his ashes roam ?
Turn your sad sighs to heav'nly songs,
And shout a pilgrim home.



THE
ADDRESS
AT THE
INTERMENT.

MANY and various, solemn and striking are those warnings which the eternal Sovereign gives us of our approaching end. He speaks to us in his word; he speaks in the course of his providence; and his language is, BE YE READY.—But, alas, how little are the generality of mankind disposed to regard the voice of God! How little concerned to lay up treasure in heaven, to have their hearts detached from the world, and to “be found in Christ, without spot and blameless!”

At the tomb of a departed friend, various of the most serious and interesting truths are suggested to our minds. A grave, when beheld in the light of Divine Revelation, is big with instruction. It reads us a lecture in the most emphatical style, on subjects of the greatest importance. It solicits, it demands our attention to those things which reason, which conscience, which God himself declares are of the highest possible moment to all the human race.

When looking into a grave, we can scarcely help reflecting on *the shortness of time*. Yes, my
H fellow-

follow-mortals, in our present situation, if not sunk into brutal stupidity, we can hardly avoid adopting the language of Moses; "So teach us "to number our days, that we may apply our "hearts unto wisdom." For we cannot but subscribe the declarations of that venerable ancient, who said; "Man that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble. He "cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; "he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth "not." So short, so uncertain is life!

And as our present situation reminds us of the shortness of time, so it loudly proclaims *the vanity of the world*. Here we behold the remains of an amiable young man, consigned over to the dreary mansions of the dead;—the remains of one who was settled in business; whose circumstances in the world were easy, with a fair prospect of growing reputation and increasing substance. Yet, notwithstanding all these promising appearances, he is gone. His immortal spirit has taken her flight into the invisible state, and his body, after a long and painful illness, is a breathless corpse, is a prisoner of the tomb, and food for worms.—Nor is it a single object of mortality that we here behold. While in this place of skulls, where death has erected his standard, and where trophies of his power abound, multitudes of such objects accost our eyes. We here live among the dead, and we tread on the dust of thousands. What then,—I appeal to the most inconsiderate among you,—what is the world with all its pleasures? What is time with all its enjoyments? To a creature formed for eternity, to man that must quickly die, they are empty as a bubble, and fleeting as a shadow; in their enjoyment, very unsatisfy-

ing; in their continuance, absolutely uncertain.—Be wise then, ye children of this world! be wise, and pursue nobler objects! or else, omniscience will pronounce you fools; death will beggar you for ever; judgment will publish your shame, and sink you deep in eternal ruin.

Nor can we attentively view a coffin, a corpse, and a grave, without being struck with a sense of *the evil, the dreadful evil of sin*. Whence those enfeebling languors and racking pains, that afflict the body? How comes it that we are all exposed to the power of wasting disease, and to the stroke of relentless death? Whence is it that the human frame, which is the workmanship of God, and one of the fairest parts of the visible creation, should be liable to the foul dishonour and the abhorred putrefaction of a grave? Why is death so frequently making depredations among us? And why so constantly “calling for human carcases to mend the soil?” In the volume of inspiration the reason is obvious: for it is written, “sin entered into the world, and death by sin.”—And whence, but from the same dreadfully malignant source, proceed those painful reflections on the past, and awful apprehensions of the future, which are so common to men? Sin has unhinged the mortal frame. Corruption and guilt are interwoven with our constitution. The understanding is darkened, and the will stubborn; the affections are sordid, and the conscience defiled. The baneful contagion has spread itself through the whole man.—Nor does the evil of sin terminate here. It extends to a future state. For, where grace does not interpose its benign agency, it subjects mankind to the curse of the law, and the wrath of God; to the damnation of hell, and

the vengeance of eternal fire. Such, ye careless sinners, is the nature, and such the demerit of your crimes! And give me leave to inform you that death to an unconverted man is the officer of divine justice, commissioned to arrest and bring him to the bar of judgment, there to answer for his rebellious conduct against his Infinite Sovereign.

Of what unspeakable importance is it then, *to be ready for death!* Ready, as interested in Jesus Christ; ready, as converted to him; ready, as waiting for his coming. Without an interest in his atoning blood, all our guilt must lie upon us, which, like a mountain of lead, will press us down for ever, and render our immortal existence worse than the loss of being. Without his converting grace, we have no relish for spiritual things, nor any capacity for heavenly enjoyments. A dreadful situation this! For any of you to die in it, is to lose your souls, is to die eternally. And if we wait not for the coming of Christ, if we live not in expectation of leaving the world, a sudden death may surprise and terrify us. It is therefore both our duty and happiness to be looking for it, to have our affections on things above, and to be ready to depart, at a moment's warning.

Such are the solemn truths which a corpse and a sepulchre bring to our minds. But when we consider ourselves as viewing the grave of a real Christian; of one who died in the faith of Jesus, and in the lively hope of a blissful immortality; we have thoughts of a nobler kind, and of a more engaging nature suggested to us. In such a case, we are led to reflect on *the great, the astonishing, the glorious alteration* which has taken place, in the state and circumstances of
the

the deceased. For, whatever pain or disease, whatever sufferings or sorrows he might feel while in the body, he is freed, eternally freed from them all. His immortal spirit having left the earthly tabernacle, is "present with the Lord;" beholds his glory, and is ravished with his beauty. And the Revelation of God assures us, that the time is coming, when his body, though "sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory;" at which grand period he shall enjoy, in his whole person, consummate felicity. To him therefore, the king of terrors is converted into a messenger of peace; he comes with an angel's face, and a deliverer's hand. Well, then, might an infallible writer say to his Christian friends, when speaking in the congratulatory strain, "Death is yours."

And such, my brethren, I am fully persuaded, is the sepulchre we now surround. For it contains the corpse of one who gave the most satisfactory evidence that he was well acquainted with the depravity of his nature, and the evil of sin; that he had fled for refuge to Jesus Christ, and found him all-sufficient. Yes, our deceased friend gave abundant evidence, that he experienced the renewing energy of the Holy Spirit, and placed his confidence in atoning blood; that he sincerely loved his Lord, and longed for a complete conformity to him; that he thought no character too low for himself, as a perishing sinner; nor any too high for that grace, by which he expected salvation.—But I will not enlarge on this topic; lest any of you should think that I aim to dignify earth and ashes. I said, *earth and ashes*: for what else are the best of Christians before the ETERNAL GOD? In his presence, angels are worms, and saints are dust.

I would

I would rather, therefore, direct your attention to that SOVEREIGN GRACE which delights in saving the wretched, and in exalting the worthless—that favour which is better than life; which was, to the deceased, a solid foundation of hope, and a source of exuberant joy. Say, ye that were frequently near his bed, in the time of his long, languishing, painful illness, did not grace appear, did it not shine, with peculiar lustre in the supports he received and the consolations he possessed, from day to day? Did he ever give the least intimation that his patience and fortitude, his hopes and his joys arose from any other quarter? Did he not consider himself as the chief of sinners, even when he exulted in expectation of an eternal crown? Did it not appear to you that God was with him; that he had a large foretaste of celestial bliss; and that the last months of his life were by far the happiest he had ever known notwithstanding the extremity of his pains and his increasing languors? Ye will not, therefore, question the propriety of applying to him the following lines:

“ His God sustain’d him in his final hour;

“ His final hour brought glory to his God.”

But shall ye, who beheld his afflictions and were witnesses of his divine supports, be satisfied with saying; “ Thus he was afflicted, and “ thus he rejoiced—Thus he lived, and thus “ he died?” Far be it! Providence has placed this example of suffering patience and triumphant faith before your eyes, to be an additional evidence of the reality and boundless worth of true religion; to be a voucher for the honour of saving grace, and the infinite excellence of wisdom’s ways. Are not you all desirous of being happy? Do you not long to possess that peace
which

which the world cannot give, and which neither sickness nor pain can destroy or impair—that divine peace, which rises into exultation at the approach of death, and kindles into transport at a grave? Such peace there is; such peace Jesus affords, and it has been enjoyed by thousands; among whom the deceased is to be numbered. And be it known to you, if ever you possess the blessing, you must receive it as a gift of sovereign mercy, not as the reward of your own merit; you must have it in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, in communion with God, and obedience to his commands. Seek for it then; and the Lord grant you the ineffable favour!

As we have sufficient ground to conclude that our dear departed brother is now at rest, in the bosom of Jesus, his surviving relatives have abundant reason to mingle gratitude and praise to God, with their tender effusions of sorrow and tears. Yes, my Christian friends, you have reason to be exceedingly thankful to that Almighty Being, who dealt so graciously with the deceased; who made his dying-bed the seat of spiritual instruction, of heavenly peace, and holy triumph. Of this you are not ignorant. Be careful then to improve the solemn, I may add, the glorious event, to the honour of distinguishing grace and your own spiritual advantage!—Are any of you ignorant of God and in a state of unbelief? May this dispensation of Providence be the happy mean of enlightening your minds, of alarming your consciences, and of exciting you to flee from the wrath to come!—Are you acquainted with God, and happy in a sense of his favour; do you believe in Jesus,
and

and make a profession of his gospel? May the affecting stroke, which you now feel, promote in you, genuine humility and constant watchfulness, a lively faith in our divine Lord, and an advancement in real holiness! And, having finished your course, may you calmly fall asleep in Jesus, as this our brother did, whose departure you now lament! *Amen.*



THE END.

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